

The overwhelming majority of Americans believe that this kind of discrimination is wrong. According to a 2003 Gallup study, 88 percent of Americans believe that gays and lesbians should have equal job opportunities. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act is strongly supported by labor unions and a broad religious coalition. They know that America will not reach its full potential or realize its promise of equal justice and equal opportunity for all until we end all forms of discrimination.

Over 60 percent of Fortune 500 companies have implemented non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation. Our legislation has been endorsed by leading corporations such as AT&T, BP, Cisco Systems, Eastman Kodak, FleetBoston, General Mills, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, JP Morgan Chase & Co., Microsoft, Nike, Oracle, Shell Oil, and Verizon.

Small businesses support our legislation as well. At a hearing in 2001, Lucy Billingsly, a Republican small business owner in Dallas, said, "A uniform Federal law banning sexual orientation discrimination will give businesses the right focus. By paying attention to the quality of work being done and not to factors that have nothing to do with job performance, all of America's businesses will perform better."

Despite broad-based support in the business community and Congress's history of enacting anti-discrimination legislation, some argue that the solution to the problem of job discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation should be left to the States. I disagree. Only 14 States and the District of Columbia have laws similar to the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Too many American workers are left without redress. A Federal law is clearly needed to ensure that all Americans receive equal treatment in the workplace.

Hard-working citizens in every State deserve the opportunity to feel secure in their jobs when they perform well, and they deserve the opportunity to compete in the workplace when they are qualified for a job. Job discrimination based on sexual orientation is unacceptable, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I am delighted to join with Senators KENNEDY, CHAFEE, JEFFORDS and many other colleagues as an original cosponsor of this important legislation, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2003. By guaranteeing that American workers cannot lose their jobs simply because of their sexual orientation, this bill would extend the bedrock American values of fairness and equality to a group of our fellow citizens who too often have been denied the benefit of those most basic values.

More than 225 years ago, Thomas Jefferson laid out a vision of America as dedicated to the simple idea that all of us are created equal, endowed by our creator with the unalienable rights to

life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. As Jefferson knew, our society did not in his time live up to that ideal, but since his time, we have been trying to. In succeeding generations, we have worked ever harder to ensure that our society removes unjustified barriers to individual achievement and that we judge each other solely on our merits and not on characteristics that are irrelevant to the task at hand. We are still far from perfect, but we have made much progress, especially over the past few decades, guaranteeing equality and fairness to an increasing number of groups that traditionally have not had the benefits of those values and of those protections. To African-Americans, to women, to disabled Americans, to religious minorities and to others we have extended a legally enforceable guarantee that, with respect to their ability to earn a living at least, they will be treated on their merits and not on characteristics unrelated to their ability to do their jobs.

It is time to extend that guarantee to gay men and lesbians, who too often have been denied the most basic of rights: the right to obtain and maintain a job. A collection of 1 national survey and 20 city and State surveys found that as many as 44 percent of gay, lesbian and bisexual workers faced job discrimination in the workplace at some time in their careers. Other studies have reported even greater discrimination—as much as 68 percent of gay men and lesbians reporting employment discrimination. The fear in which these workers live was clear from a survey of gay men and lesbians in Philadelphia. Over three-quarters told those conducting the survey that they sometimes or always hide their orientation at work out of fear of discrimination.

The toll this discrimination takes extends far beyond its effect on the individuals who live without full employment opportunities. It also takes an unacceptable toll on America's definition of itself as a land of equality and opportunity, as a place where we judge each other on our merits, and as a country that teaches its children that anyone can succeed here as long as they are willing to do their job and work hard.

This bill provides for equality and fairness—that and no more. It says only what we already have said for women, for people of color and for others; that you are entitled to have your ability to earn a living depend only on your ability to do the job and nothing else.

This bill would bring our nation one large step closer to realizing the vision that Thomas Jefferson so eloquently expressed 227 years ago when he wrote that all of us have a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

By Ms. STABENOW:

S. 1707. A bill to amend title 39, United States Code, to provide for free

mailing privileges for personal correspondence and certain parcels sent from within the United States to members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty abroad who are engaged in military operations involving armed conflict against a hostile foreign force, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Providing Our Support to Troops or POST Act of 2003. This bill would provide free mailing privileges for letters and packages sent from within the United States to members of the Armed Forces serving on active duty abroad who are engaged in military operations involving armed conflict against a hostile foreign force. This bill is a companion bill to Representative LUCAS's H.R. 2705, a bill with 31 bipartisan cosponsors in the House of Representatives.

Our troops overseas can send mail and packages to their loved ones at no cost, but their families must pay postage to do the same. As the holidays approach, the families back here in the States are not only not able to give their Christmas or Hanukkah presents to their loved ones in person, but they have to pay postage to do so.

Two constituents of mine, both mothers of servicemen in Iraq, brought this inequity to my attention. Renee Walton from Lincoln Park, MI, mother of twins Jeremy and Joshua who are serving in the Marine Corps, writes, "I believe this is something all the troops' families will benefit from and most especially the soldier who is waiting patiently for a package from home."

Suzann Sareini, a Dearborn resident, says, "As a mother of one of the brave individuals in our armed forces fighting for this country, I believe this act exhibits a tremendous amount of patriotic gratitude for the sacrifices being made by members of the military and their families. This small gesture would be invaluable in its contribution to the morale of our soldiers waiting patiently for packages from back home."

I wholeheartedly agree with these two Michigan moms.

Currently 2,500 Michigan Guard and Reserves are on active duty, many of whom are serving in Iraq or Afghanistan or fighting the war against terrorism around the globe. That means that there are thousands of families who will have an empty seat at the Thanksgiving table and will be missing a loved one during the holidays. But, by providing free postage for these families, we are making it easier for them to stay in touch with their loved ones and provide them with moral support. This is only fair since our service men and women have so unselfishly made great sacrifices to protect us and our country. This is a small gesture, but one that will speak loudly in the hearts of our troops and their families.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.